

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 02529 291739Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 2529

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS PRESIDENT'S PARTY AND SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BL
SUBJECT: MY MEETING WITH BANZER AND THE BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS

REF: LA PAZ 2511

1. PRESIDENT BANZER WANTS TO SEE ME TOMORROW, MARCH 30, AT NOON; THEREFORE I WILL NEED ANY GUIDANCE BEFORE THEN.

2. POLITICAL EVENTS ARE MOVING VERY QUICKLY HERE. POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN AT THIS POINT. GENERAL PEREDA, DISGUSTED WITH BANZER'S CAVILLATION AND THE MILITARY'S DOUBTS, MAY ANNOUNCE WITHDRAWAL OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY TODAY. THIS WOULD MEAN POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS ON EITHER OF TWO BASES. EITHER THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY DECIDED TO POSTPONE AND PEREDA IS RESPONDING TO THIS (HE TOLD ME LAST NIGHT HE WOULD WITHDRAW IF THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO POSTPONE), OR PEREDA, IN JUMPING THE GUN, WILL FORCE THE POSTPONEMENT. THE CURRENT DISARRAY OF THE MILITARY AND THE CIVILIAN PARTIES MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE THAT OTHER CANDIDATES OF SUFFICIENT BACKING TO GOVERN THIS COUNTRY COULD BE DEVELOPED IN TIME FOR JULY ELECTIONS.

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3. THE MAIN ISSUE REMAINING IN WHICH WE MAY HAVE SOME SMALL INFLUENCE IS WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT TAKES THE HIGH OR THE LOW ROAD ON POSTPONEMENT. THE HIGH ROAD WOULD BE POSTPONEMENT FOR SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR, WITH CONCURRENCE OF CIVILIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND GUARANTEE OF THE NEW ELECTION DATE BY THE MILITARY RATHER THAN JUST A MERCURIAL AND INCREASINGLY DISCREDITED BANZER. THE LOW ROAD WOULD BE POSTPONEMENT

WITHOUT DATE, BLAMING THIS ON INTERNAL SUBVERSION AND EXTERNAL AGGRESSION (CHILE, US TIN SALES), AND INSTALLING A HARD-LINE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD TRY TO UNDO THE LIBERALIZATION OF THE LAST SIX MONTHS. AT THE MOMENT THE ODDS APPEAR SLIGHTLY TO FAVOR THE HIGH ROAD. THE LOW ROAD WOULD PROBABLY INCITE SOME VIOLENCE, FROM THE LEFT AND STUDENTS IN PARTICULAR.

BOEKER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S PARTY.

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